

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of displaying hover assistance on a display screen, comprising:
moving a pointer element to a position over a user interface element shown on the display screen in response to user manipulation of a pointing device;
while the pointer element is positioned over the user interface element, invoking a first hover element for display on the display screen; and
invoking a second hover element for display on the display screen after invoking the first hover element, and while the pointer element continues to be positioned over the user interface element.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the second hover element provides more detail regarding the user interface element relative to the first hover element.
3. The method of claim 1, further comprising displaying the first and second hover elements simultaneously for a period of time and while the pointer element continues to be positioned over the user interface element.
4. The method of claim 1, further comprising removing from display the first hover element upon invoking the second hover element.
5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
removing the pointer element from the position over the user interface element; and
removing from display at least one of the first hover element and the second hover element upon removing the pointer element.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein the first hover element and the second hover element comprise help text specific to the user interface element.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein the first hover element and the second hover element are displayed in a single text box.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of the first hover element and the second hover element comprises information that is generated using at least one of a flash, video, audio, extensible markup language (XML) and hypertext generation tool.
9. The method of claim 1, wherein invoking the second hover element occurs after one of (i) expiration of a predefined period of time and (ii) a user input command to display the second hover element, whichever occurs first.
10. The method of claim 1, wherein invoking the first hover element occurs after expiration of a first predefined period of time and invoking the second hover element occurs after expiration of a second predefined period of time, wherein the first predefined period of time is shorter than the second predefined period of time and wherein expiration of both the first predefined period of time and the second predefined period of time are calculated from the same event.
11. The method of claim 10, wherein the same event is detecting the pointer element at the position over the user interface element.
12. The method of claim 1, wherein invoking the first hover element occurs after expiration of a first period of time and invoking the second hover element occurs in response to user input from an input device.
13. The method of claim 1, further comprising copying at least one of the first hover element and the second hover element to a clipboard.
14. The method of claim 13, wherein copying the at least one of the first hover element and the second hover element to the clipboard occurs in response to user input from an input device.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of the first hover element and the second hover element comprises at least one indication of an action to be performed by a user to cause execution of an associated operation.
16. The method of claim 15, wherein the associated operation is displaying a help window including detailed help specific to the user interface element.
17. The method of claim 1, further comprising successively invoking a plurality of hover elements after invoking the second hover element.
18. The method of claim 17, wherein each successive hover element of the plurality of hover elements provides more detail regarding the user interface element relative to each previous hover element.
19. The method of claim 17, wherein invoking of each successive hover element occurs after one of (i) expiration of a predefined period of time and (ii) a user input command to display the successive hover element, whichever occurs first.
20. A method of displaying hover assistance for a user on a display screen, comprising:
 - moving a pointer element to a position over a user interface element shown on the display screen in response to user manipulation of a pointing device; and
 - while the pointer element is positioned over the user interface element:
 - determining a hover assistance detail level for the user; and
 - invoking a hover element with the determined hover assistance detail level for display on the display screen.
21. The method of claim 20, wherein invoking the hover element comprises:
 - successively invoking a plurality of hover elements with increasingly greater hover assistance detail levels for display on the display screen.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein successively invoking the plurality of hover elements comprises:

for each successive hover element of the plurality of hover elements having an associated hover element detail level:

determining whether the successive hover element is to be invoked on the basis of user preferences.

23. The method of claim 20, wherein the hover assistance detail level is determined on the basis of at least one of (i) a determined user behavior pattern and (ii) user preferences received from the user via an input device.

24. A computer readable medium containing a program which, when executed, performs an operation of displaying hover assistance on a display screen, the operation comprising:

detecting a pointer element at a position over a user interface element shown on the display screen;

while the pointer element is positioned over the user interface element, invoking a first hover element for display on the display screen; and

invoking a second hover element for display on the display screen after invoking the first hover element, and while the pointer element continues to be positioned over the user interface element.

25. The computer readable medium of claim 24, wherein the second hover element provides more detail regarding the user interface element relative to the first hover element.

26. The computer readable medium of claim 24, wherein the operation further comprises:

displaying the first and second hover elements simultaneously for a period of time and while the pointer element continues to be positioned over the user interface element.

27. The computer readable medium of claim 24, wherein the operation further comprises:

removing from display the first hover element upon invoking the second hover element.

28. The computer readable medium of claim 24, wherein the operation further comprises:

detecting removal of the pointer element from the position over the user interface element; and

removing from display at least one of the first hover element and the second hover element upon detecting the removal of the pointer element.

29. The computer readable medium of claim 24, wherein the first hover element and the second hover element comprise help text specific to the user interface element.

30. The computer readable medium of claim 24, wherein the first hover element and the second hover element are displayed in a single text box.

31. The computer readable medium of claim 24, wherein at least one of the first hover element and the second hover element comprises information that is generated using at least one of a flash, video, audio, extensible markup language (XML) and hypertext generation tool.

32. The computer readable medium of claim 24, wherein invoking the second hover element occurs after one of (i) expiration of a predefined period of time and (ii) a user input command to display the second hover element, whichever occurs first.

33. The computer readable medium of claim 24, wherein invoking the first hover element occurs after expiration of a first predefined period of time and invoking the second hover element occurs after expiration of a second predefined period of time,

wherein the first predefined period of time is shorter than the second predefined period of time and wherein expiration of both the first predefined period of time and the second predefined period of time are calculated from the same event.

34. The computer readable medium of claim 33, wherein the same event is detecting the pointer element at the position over the user interface element.

35. The computer readable medium of claim 24, wherein invoking the first hover element occurs after expiration of a first period of time and invoking the second hover element occurs in response to receiving user input from an input device.

36. The computer readable medium of claim 24, wherein the operation further comprises:

copying at least one of the first hover element and the second hover element to a clipboard.

37. The computer readable medium of claim 36, wherein copying the at least one of the first hover element and the second hover element to the clipboard occurs in response to receiving user input from an input device.

38. The computer readable medium of claim 24, wherein at least one of the first hover element and the second hover element comprises at least one indication of an action to be performed by a user to cause execution of an associated operation.

39. The computer readable medium of claim 38, wherein the associated operation is displaying a help window including detailed help specific to the user interface element.

40. The computer readable medium of claim 24, wherein the operation further comprises:

successively invoking a plurality of hover elements after invoking the second hover element.

41. The computer readable medium of claim 40, wherein each successive hover element of the plurality of hover elements provides more detail regarding the user interface element relative to each previous hover element.

42. The computer readable medium of claim 40, wherein invoking of each successive hover element occurs after one of (i) expiration of a predefined period of time and (ii) a user input command to display the successive hover element, whichever occurs first.

43. A system, comprising:

- a display screen;

- a graphical user interface displayable on the display screen;

- an input device for controlling movement of a pointer element over graphical user interface elements of the graphical user interface; and

- a hover assistance manager configured for:

- detecting a pointer element at a position over a user interface element shown on the display screen;

- while the pointer element is positioned over the user interface element, invoking a first hover element for display on the display screen; and

- invoking a second hover element for display on the display screen after invoking the first hover element, and while the pointer element continues to be positioned over the user interface element.